

**CLAIMS**

1. A method for encoding a digital video signal, said digital video signal comprising some sets of objects (OBJ) with associated shapes, characterized in that it comprises the steps of:
  - Defining information (FLAG) for determining if the shape of an object (OBJ) is to be  
5 encoded, or its complement's one, and
  - As a function of this information (FLAG), encoding said shape or its complement.
2. A method of processing a digital video signal as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that  
10 the complement is the complement (NOT\_OBJ) of an object (OBJ) in an image frame.
3. A method of processing a digital video signal as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that  
a bounding box (BOUND\_BOX) is associated with an object (OBJ) and the complement  
is the complement (NOT\_OBJ\_BB) of an object (OBJ) within its bounding box  
(BOUND\_BOX).  
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4. A method of processing a digital video signal as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that  
it has a further step of encoding the bounding box coordinates of said object (OBJ).
5. A method of processing a digital video signal as claimed in any one of the claims 1 to 4,  
20 characterized in that the information is activated when an object (OBJ) has a bounding  
box (BOUND\_BOX) with frontiers in common with an image comprising said object  
(OBJ).
6. A method of processing a digital video signal as claimed in any one of the claims 1 to 5,  
25 characterized in that when the bounding box (BOUND\_BOX) of an object (OBJ) is  
greater than the bounding box (BOUND\_BOX) of its complement (NOT\_OBJ,  
NOT\_OBJ\_BB), its complement's shape is encoded.
7. A computer program product for an encoder (ENC), comprising a set of instructions,  
30 which, when loaded into said encoder (ENC), causes the encoder (ENC) to carry out the  
method claimed in claims 1 to 6.

8. A computer program product for a computer, comprising a set of instructions, which, when loaded into said computer, causes the computer to carry out the method claimed in claims 1 to 6.

5 9. A method for decoding a digital video signal, said digital video signal comprising some sets of objects (OBJ) with associated shapes, characterized in that it comprises the steps of:

- Retrieving information (FLAG), which determines if the shape of an object (OBJ) has been encoded or its complement's one,

10 - As a function of said information (FLAG), decoding said shape or its complement (NOT\_OBJ, NOT\_OBJ\_BB), and

- If the complement has been decoded, retrieving the shape as a function of said complement (NOT\_OBJ, NOT\_OBJ\_BB).

15 10. An encoder (ENC) for encoding a digital video signal, said digital video signal comprising some sets of objects (OBJ) with associated shapes, characterized in that it comprises an information (FLAG) for determining if the shape of an object (OBJ) is to be encoded, or its complement's one, and encoding means for encoding said shape or its complement as a function of said information (FLAG).

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11. A decoder (DEC) for decoding a digital video signal, said digital video signal comprising some sets of objects (OBJ) with associated shapes, characterized in that it comprises decoding means for retrieving an information (FLAG), which determines if the shape of an object (OBJ) has been encoded or its complement's one, for decoding said shape or its complement as a function of said information (FLAG), and for retrieving the shape as a function of said complement if the complement (NOT\_OBJ, NOT\_OBJ\_BB) has been decoded.

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12. A video communication system (SYS), which is able to receive a digital video signal, comprising a transmitter (REC) with an encoder (ENC) as claimed in claim 10 for encoding said video signal, a transmission channel (CH) for transmitting the encoded video signal and a receiver (RECEIV) with a decoder (DEC) as claimed in claim 11 for decoding said encoded video signal.

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